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Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-12 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
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FOR D/HA ROSENBLATT

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE PRESS CONFERENCE
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

REF: 77 BANGKOK 5046

FOLLOWING ARE EDITED OF EXCEPTS FROM Q&A THAT FOLLOWED
THE IRC FEBRUARY 18 PRESS CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK:

Q: MR. CHERNE, COULD YOU THINK OF ANY REASON WHY, GIVEN THE
SIZE AND ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF THE UNITED STATES, AND
THE MAGNITUDE OF ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR IN INDO-CHINA,
THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT DECLARE OURSELVES READY TO
TAKE ALL INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES AND ALLOW THOSE WHO WANT
TO (INAUDIBLE)?

CHERNE: I CAN THINK OF A NUMBER OF REASONS WHICH OPERATE AS
A VERY REAL RESTRAINT IN THE UNITED STATES. THE PRESENCE OF
HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT HIGHER THAN EXISTS IN ANY OTHER
INDUSTRIAL COUNTRY AT THE PRESENT TIME WITH THE EXCEPTION OF
CANADA, IS A VERY SERIOUS FACT OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE IN THE
UNITED STATES AND A VERY REAL IMPEDIMENT AND ONE WOULD HAVE TO
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UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS, ESPECIALLY A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY WHICH MUST
BE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF ITS PEOPLE.

Q: FROM THE VARIED CONTACT THAT YOUR GROUP HAS HAD OVER A LONG
PERIOD OF TIME, WITH VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE AREAS WHERE REFUGEES
ARE NOW ENCAMPED, ARE YOU IN A POSITION TO MAKE A PROJECTION
AS TO HOW MANY REFUGEES MIGHT BE ULTIMATELY INVOLVED ALONG

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WITH HOW LONG THE CONDITION WILL LAST?

CHERNE: WE HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT WE HAVE NEITHER THE CAPABILITY OF PENETRATING THE POSSIBLE FUTURE OF POLITICAL EVENTS INSIDE THE COUNTRIES INSIDE WHICH THE TYRANNY EXISTS, NOR THE EXTENT TO WHICH THOSE MOST MOTIVATED TO SEEK FREEDOM WILL AT SOME POINT BEGIN TO DWINDLE IN NUMBER, IF INDEED THEY DO. AND THE ONLY HONEST ANSWER I CAN GIVE YOU AT THIS POINT IS THAT WE DO NOT HAVE SENSE OF WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE ULTIMATE MAGNITUDE OF THIS PROBLEM.

Q: PARTICULARLY SINCE LAST NOVEMBER, A NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM LAOS HAVE BEEN TURNED BACK AT THE BORDER OR HAVE BEEN SENT BACK FOR THE VERY REASONS YOU SPOKE OF. THEY HAVE BEEN CATEGORIZED AS ECONIMIC REFUGEES PRIMARILY. DOES YOU GROUP HAVE IDEA OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TURNED BACK DURING THAT PERIOD?

CHERNE: REGRETABLY WE HAVE NO IDEA OF THE NUMBER. WE HAVE SOUGHT TO FIND OUT TWO THINGS: WE HAVE SOUGHT TO HAVE SOME SENSE OF THE NUMBER AND WE HAVE SOUGHT TO HAVE AN ABSOLUTE SENSE THAT IT HAS EXISTED, THIS PRACTICE DID IN FACT AND DOES IN FACT OCCUR, AND WE HAVE HEARD EVERYTHING FROM DENIAL TO REMARKABLY CANDID ADMISSION THAT IT DOES INDEED EXIST. WE CANNOT NUMBERICIZE IT, WE CAN SIMPLY ADD THE STRONGEST VOICE WE CAN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THE MOST BASIC HUMAN CONCERN OF ALL: FORCED REPATRIATION. AND IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE PAID THE PARTICULAR ATTENTION WE DID
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TO TRY TO BRING TO AN END ONE OF THE SPURIOUS MEANS WHICH WORKS TO ASSIST THIS PROCESS, THAT FALSE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ECONO-MIC AND THE POLITICAL REFUGEE.

Q: HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO CRITICS OF THIS PROGRAM THAT IT WOULD LEAD TO FURTHER REFUGEES COMING OUT?

CHERNE: THE PROGRAM ITSELF IN MY JUDGEMENT, ISSUED BY THIS PRIVATE COMMISSION WILL HAVE NO SUCH EFFECT WHATEVER. NOW I DON'T KNOW WHETHER I SHOULD ADDRESS MYSELF TO THE QUESTION THAT YOU MIGHT NEXT ASK BUT HAVEN'T: WERE THIS PROGRAM TO BE ADOPTED WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT. I WOULD THINK IF THE PROGRAM WERE ADOPTED, IT WOULD HAVE SOME EFFECT, BUT WE HAVE OBSERVED AT OTHER POINTS OF THE WORLD THAT EFFORTS WHICH FINALLY DID HAVE THE RESULT OF ACHIE-VING HUMANITARIAN MEASURES DID NOT HAVE THE EFFECT ONE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED OF ANY SIGNIFICANT INCREASE OF THOSE WHO IN THE LAST ANALYSIS DO RISK THEIR LIVES, GIVE UP ALL, SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM FAMILY IN ORDER TO TAKE THIS STEP. THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY LIMITS TO THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO RISK A PRICE SO GREAT.

Q: A QUESTION ON REFUGEES WHO ARRIVE BY BOAT. THE UNITED STATES HAS AGREED TO TAKE 7000 MORE OF THEM. YET THE CAMPS WHERE THEY

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ARE KEPT ARE FULL, WHICH MAKES THE GOVERNMENTS OF FIRST ASYLUM MOST RELUCTANT TO TAKE THEM. THE RESULT IS, PROBABLY, THAT A NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE DYING AT SEA, BECAUSE THOSE THAT ARE BRING-ING THEM IN KNOW THAT THEY WON'T GET A FRIENDLY RECEPTION. THE UNITED STATES WAS CAPABLE IN 1975 OF BRINGING WELL OVER 100,000 PEOPLE VERY QUICKLY TO THE UNITED STATES, AND TAKING CARE OF THEIR FORMALITIES THEN. WOULD YOU FAVOR THAT THE UNITED STATES TAKE ALL BOAT PEOPLE, AT LEAST TO THE NUMBER THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS ALREADY AGREED TO ACCEPT, THAT IS 7000 MORE, TO THE UNITED STATES NOW IN ORDER TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THESE PEOPLE TO LIVE WHO WOULD OTHERWISE DIE AT SEA?

CHERNE: WE WILL, IN THE COURSE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WE WILL MAKE, IF OUR PRESENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION REMAINS
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AS IT IS AT THIS POINT, SUGGEST THAT THE UNITED STATES AT THE VERY LEAST AND AT AN EARLY MOMENT, IDENTIFY A LOCATION TO WHICH ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CLEARED FOR ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES BE MOVED TO THAT LOCATION WHERE THE NECESSARY SPONSORSHIPS AND ALL OF THE OTHER LABORIOUS AND TIME-CONSUMING ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE WITHOUT SUBJECTING THESE PEOPLES TO THE INDIGNITIES OF THE LIVES THEY LIVE AND WITHOUT SUBJECTING THE COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM TO THE MASSIVE BURDENS WHICH THEIR PRESENCE IMPOSES. SO THAT WHILE OUR PRESENT RECOMMENDATION WOULD GO A SMALL DISTANCE SHORTER THAN YOURS, IT IS IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

Q: ABOUT 16 PERCENT OF THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEES, PRINCIPALLY IN THAILAND, ARE HILLTRIBE PEOPLE FROM LAOS. THEY ARE THE PEOPLE WHO BORE THE BRUNT OF THE FIGHTING, THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES IN LAOS, WHICH IS THE MAIN REASON FOR THEIR PRESENT PREDICAMENT. THEY WOULD FIND IT VERY HARD TO BE RELOCATED IN ANOTHER COUNTRY, BECAUSE OF THEIR WAY OF LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS. MY QUESTION IS, WILL YOUR REPORT RECOMMEND THAT PROVISION BE MADE FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND TO RELOCATE AND RESETTLE AS MANY OF THESE PEOPLE, PERHAPS AS MANY AS 70,000 AT THE PRESENT MOMENT IN THIS COUNTRY IN A SURROUNDING SUITABLE TO THEIR WAY OF LIFE?

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IT IS NOT OUR EXPERIENCE THAT THE HILLTRIBES PEOPLE ARE DIFFICULT TO RESETTLE IN THE UNITED STATES. IT WOULD SEEM LOGICAL THAT THEY MIGHT BE, BUT THE FACT IS THAT THE HILLTRIBE PEOPLE HAVE, IN FACT, MADE A MOST REMARKABLE ADAPTATION IN THE UNITED STATES. A RATHER SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF THESE HILLTRIBE PEOPLE HAVE CONGREGATED AROUND THE SAN DIEGO (CALIFORNIA) AREA, FAR DISTANT FROM THE KIND OF CLIMATE, CIRCUMSTANCES, SO FORTH, IN WHICH ONE SEES THEM LIVING.

THE UNITED STATES IS NOT WITHOUT A VARIETY OF LOCATIONS SUITABLE FOR PEOPLE WHO LIVE AT THAT ALTITUDE. BUT FINALLY, THE MAJOR IMPEDIMENT FOR THEM AT THE PRESENT TIME IS THE APPLICATION OF CRITERIA WHICH ARE VIRTUALLY DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO PROVE, TO SATISFY. FOR WE ARE AWARE THAT THEY PAID THE HIGHEST PRICE IN CASUALTIES, AND OUR REPORT SAYS SO, IN THE CONFLICT IN LAOS.

WE, IN OUR REPORT, HAVE INDICATED OUR DEEP INTEREST IN URGING UPON ANY GOVERNMENT, AND THIS VERY MUCH INCLUDES THAILAND, THAT THEY EXPLORE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR RESETTLEMENT IN COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, NOT BECAUSE WE WOULD PREFER THAT THEY BE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, BUT BECAUSE BY LOGIC, THE AFFINITIES ARE GREATER. AND IN CERTAIN PARTS FOR THE HMONG, CERTAIN PARTS OF THAILAND, THE AFFINITIES ARE MORE LOGICAL. BUT THAT THE UNITED STATES PARTICIPATE GENEROUSLY IN
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ASSISTING IN THE NECESSARY STEPS TO MAKE THAT POSSIBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND.

Q: DO YOU FORESEE OR WOULD YOUR REPORT MAKE A RECOMMENDATION THAT THE UNITED STATES USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH AFFLUENT WESTERN COUNTRIES, OR ARE THERE ANY WESTERN COUNTRIES IN PARTICULAR WHICH YOU CAN SEE COULD ACCEPT MORE OF THESE REFUGEES?

A: THERE IS NO QUESTION AT ALL THAT CERTAIN COUNTRIES IN THE WEST THAT CERTAIN COUNTRIES, ONE OF THEM IN THE EAST, HAVE BEEN GENEROUS IN THEIR APPROACH TO THIS PROBLEM. PART OF OUR RECOMMENDATION IS THAT THE UNITED STATES ENCOURAGE FURTHER ACTIONS BY THOSE COUNTRIES,

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OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE DONE VERY LITTLE AND ARE AFFLUENT, AND THAT THE BEST WAY, INDEEF FOR THE UNITED STATES TO DO IT IS TO SET AN EXAMPLE. WE, BY AND LARGE, DO NOT COTTON QUICKLY TO THE NOTION OF THE UNITED STATES PERSUING POLICY BY EXHORTATION. WE THINK IT IS BETTER, AND ESPECIALLY IN THIS PROGRAM, THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD BETTER DO SOME POLICY BY ACTION.

BUT I WOULD NOT WANT TO BE AMONG THOSE WHO WOULD DESCRIBE THE UNITED STATES AS A COUNTRY WHICH HAS SIMPLY WALKED AWAY FROM THIS PROBLEM. I DO NOT BELIEVE IT HAS. O'DONOHUE

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